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BRITISH CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING TEXAS

XI

EDITED BY EPHRAIM DOUGLASS ADAMS

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN¹*Private.*

Galveston Dec. 2d. 1843.

My Lord,

The late accounts from Mexico induce me to address Your Lordship upon some points which may be of interest if these difficulties should grow into serious heats. Since I have been in this Country I have been endeavouring to procure some trust worthy information respecting the suitableness of the Rio Grande for purposes of Commerce, and therefore if need me, for flotilla operation.

An intelligent English Mariner of the name of Simpton was in the Service of the Texian Government, in command of a small revenue vessel is well acquainted with the Mouth of that river, and I hope in the course of a few weeks to forward Your Lordship a chart of it, rudely drawn indeed, but upon the general correctness of which I should be disposed to place reliance. He is now absent at Corpus Christi, but will bring his papers back with him, and I shall then be able to select what may be useful.

The river itself, so far as I can learn from persons who have crossed it at various points as high up as the Presidio Grande (which Your Lordship will find marked on all the Maps) is ill fitted for general commercial use, or military transport, being very shallow in the dry season, and it is said, having rapids, before that point. All the rivers however, discharging themselves into the Gulf, vary greatly in their navigable facilities, according to the season, and I dare say, that in the winter and spring Months, the Rio Grande would be navigable for a great distance in light iron boats, such as are used in the upper Ganges and Indus. There is a safe anchorage at it's Mouth called the "Brassos del Norte" for vessels not exceeding 10 feet of draught, but on the bar itself, there are not more than 7 feet of water.

¹F. O., Texas, Vol. 6.

My experience in China, My Lord, taught me that one very serious want of our Military Marine is a sufficiency of vessels of force and resource, either of the Steam arm, or sailing, of a light draught of water. For expeditionary purposes into an enemy's Country, and conjoint operation, when troops must be covered and supplied, this is a very great want, and I would take the liberty to submit that three classes of iron Steam boats would be very necessary for effective Service in Mexico. The largest like the "Nemesis," "Pluto," and "Pligothern" and not to draw more than 6 feet of water at the utmost, with a full supply of coal and other Materiel. A second, with a lighter Armament say a long 18 lb. brass gun, forward and aft not to draw more than 3 feet or 3 feet and a half, and lastly four or six of the class of boats employed on the Upper Indus and Ganges, or even more with a force of ten or fifteen sail of boats of these classes it may be depended upon that there would be no difficulty in penetrating into the heart of Mexico, by the Rio Grande and the rivers to the *Southward* and *Westward* of Vera Cruz. It may be added too that after San Juan had fallen there would be no manner of use for any large Ships or Steam boats on this Coast of Mexico, except to serve as Depots for the light force in advance.

Matamoros, Tampico, Alvarado, Tabasco are all accessible to Vessels of the draught I have indicated, Indeed I should mention that at Tabasco there are 11 feet of water on the bar, and that is one point to which I would most particularly draw Your Lordship's attention.

The temper of Yucatan and Tabasco towards the present Government of Mexico is a consideration of much interest. The Tabasco river, or indeed the rivers into which the Main stream branches are navigable for a great distance. The Texian Corvette "Austin" for example drawing upwards of 10 feet of Water went up as high as San Juan de Baptiste (about 80 Miles from the Mouth) and I believe there is said to be a boat communication very nearly the whole way to the City of Mexico by that Stream.

If that point were at once secured, and the people of that Province assured of protection and security at the period of the General Settlement, it is in the highest degree probable, that they would at once declare against the Central Government, and either join themselves to Guatemala or to Yucatan, forming a Republic with easy means of communication between the two Seas, and good

ports on either Shore. Neither do I believe there would be much difficulty in pushing a flotilla so far either by the Tabasco Stream, (or by another to the Westward of it, also accessible by vessels of draught), that a land force might be transported to within a very few Marches of Mexico.

Tampico is another point of importance on account of it's contiguity to the Mining Districts, and with that and Matamoros in the possession of Her Majesty's forces, and declared to be free ports during the continuance of hostilities, I am disposed to think that a much more extensive trade would be carried on with Mexico, than we have ever had in a state of peace;—And further that the North Eastern Province would very readily second this scheme, and be equally unwilling to return to General Santa Aña's prohibitive system, for the better maintenance of his authority in the Central part of the Country. The eagerness with which the people of those parts of Mexico have returned to the illicit traffic between this country and their own, satisfies me that it might very easily be thrown open upon the most extensive scale.

Blockade, Your Lordship will perhaps permit me to remark, is a mode of Warfare less likely to be stringent upon these people than inconvenient to ourselves, for they have no Merchant Marine to distress, and they are generally independent of foreign Commerce. Indeed it would seem that a blockade would be seconding General Santa Aña's purposes of foreign exclusion, and I am afraid of dishonesty. The supply of any force operating on the Coast between the Rio Grande and Vera Cruz (if there should be difficulties in that particular in the Country itself) could always be depended upon from Texas. Cattle are abundant here at extremely moderate rates, and depôts of every kind of provision de bouche could always be kept up here from New Orleans to any extent, and also at moderate prices. Depôts of Coal might also be formed here if it were not considered preferable to establish them at the Brassos del Norte, Tampico, and on the Keys off Vera Cruz, as well as at Loguna and Tabasco.

In the sending of stores of any kind to the Brassos del Norte, or Tampico it would be necessary that they should be transported in vessels of very light draught; not more than 7 feet for Tampico or 9 for the Brassos del Norte. If iron Steamers of the smaller class should be considered necessary for any purposes of Her

Majesty's Government in this quarter, I would submit that they might be sent out in frame to this place with their Machinery and everything ready for setting up, and with people competent to perform the work. It might be given out that they were sent here to be disposed of for the Navigation of the rivers of Texas, but with a Secret understanding with this Government, as to their ultimate destination; or they might be set up at Jamaica. I would take the liberty to say that Vessels for such a Service should *not be long*, on account of the sinuosities of the rivers of these Countries; from 70 to 80 feet. I would also suggest that Captain Hall late of the "Nemesis" should be consulted on all points calculated to render them more handy and efficient for Service in small Water, and in rapid streams with abrupt turns. I have seen such feats performed with vessels of light draught (the passage of the "Nemesis" to within a few miles from Canton by the *inner Channel*, for example; and where she was only prevented from arriving by having a few feet too much of length) that I have a confidence a force of the kind, I have suggested could be pushed into the very heart of Mexico.

Hoping Your Lordship will ascribe this intrusion to it's true motive, that is, a desire to further the public Service

Charles Elliot.

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN²

Galveston December 8th. 1843.

My Lord,

I have now the honor to forward Your Lordship the original draught of a Coast Chart of Texas (No 1) procured from Mr. Simpton the person to whom I adverted in my private letter of the 2d. Instant. In the event of hostilities with Mexico an accurate knowledge of the Coast and it's ports might be important, for shoal as they are, they are the most practicable in this Gulf between New Orleans and Vera Cruz, and indeed between that place and Cape Catoche, and at all events they might be necessary of resort, for purposes of Supply. I would once more take the liberty

²F. O., Texas, Vol. 6. The letter is unnumbered.

to remark that though the Chart is roughly drawn, I believe it's general accuracy may be relied upon.

I also transmit herewith a Sketch of the "Tobasco River" which I have procured from Lieut Downing H. Crisp of the Texian Navy who visited it in command of the Schooner "San Bernard" in 1841, in company with the Corvette "Austin"

This Gentleman is an Englishman by birth and the Son of an old Commander in the Royal Navy—He has been well known to me ever since I have been in Texas, and being able to speak to his good character and sufficiency as a steady Officer and Seaman, I am sure that reliance may be placed in his information as far as it goes. Mr. Crisp did not visit Huasacalcos (about a degree and a half to the Eastward of Alvarado) but one of his Brother Officers did so, and reported 8 or 9 feet water on the Bar, and good navigation inside. I believe it is at this point that the Mexican Govt. has projected a Canal to communicate with the "Chimalapa" upon the Pacific side. I may perhaps mention to Your Lordship that in my passage from England to this Country I became acquainted with a very intelligent Spanish Gentleman who had been many years in Mexico, and He assured me that the "Rio Grande" or "Tololotlan" disemboguing at San Blas upon the Pacific, is navigable at Seasons for a long way, and speaking of it's practicability for Commercial purposes, he said that he was satisfied there would be no difficulty of getting up within easy distance of Guadalajara, by that river, in such Vessels as I described to him to be navigating the Upper Ganges and Indus.—He also spoke favorably of the Tampico River and the land route from that point to San Luis de Potosi (with very little expence) for commercial transport.

I have once more to offer Your Lordship my excuses for this intrusion, but not being sure that Her Majesty's Government may have the same information, I have thought it right to transmit it. I would also beg to add that I have no good Map of Mexico with me, and am therefore unable to judge to what extent this information is either superfluous or erroneous. I would take the liberty to remark however, that if there is correctness in what I have heard of the practicability of the "Tololotlan River" or indeed of any of the Rivers disemboguing on the Pacific Shores of Mexico, there would be no difficulty in despatching an effective Steam flotilla to that part of the Coast of Mexico from Bengal and Bombay through

Torres Straits, forming Coal depots from India and New South Wales at Port Essington, the Sandwich Islands, and any other convenient points in the Pacific Islands.

Iron Steamers of the smaller class would have to be sent out in frame, and set up at the point on the Pacific Side of Mexico, or at least near the point that they are intended to move from; But such Steam Vessels as we had in China could readily perform the Voyage by Torres Strait, and keeping in a low parallell, they would avoid the strength of the Trade

Charles Elliot.

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN³

No. 34.⁴

New Orleans. Decr. 29th 1843.

My Lord,

Having reference to my despatch No 7 of this year, mentioning that the Government of Texas has levied discriminating duties on the trade from the United States, in consequence of the failure of the treaty of Commerce, I have now the honor to report that the Government of the United States by Treasury order dated on the 12th Instant has adopted a similar course in relation to the trade from Texas.

Charles Elliot.

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN⁵

Separate.

New Orleans. Decr. 29th. 1843.

My Lord,

Having reference to Your Lordship's obliging readiness to grant me leave of absence for the restoration of my health I beg to observe that in the present Situation of circumstances I have not felt myself warranted in requesting that favor. But I have taken the liberty of repairing to this place, chiefly for better advice and convenience than I can find in Texas for an instant, [having] fallen into a very weak state of health.

³F. O., Texas, Vol. 6.

⁴*Ibid.* Elliot to Aberdeen, No. 33, is omitted. It transmitted *The Civilian and Galveston Gazette* for November 8, 1843.

⁵F. O., Texas, Vol. 6.

Your Lordship is aware that I am in the channel of my public correspondence here, and I shall of course proceed to my post in any case of necessity. But in the actual attitude of affairs connected with Texas I believe I am as suitably posted at New Orleans as I should be in that Country, and I will therefore request Your Lordship's sanction to remain here or there, for the present, as I may judge most convenient for the public interests.

Charles Elliot.

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN⁶

Private.

New Orleans. December 31st 1843.

My Lord,

I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Clay last Evening, who is here upon a visit, and he made some observations upon the subject of Texian Affairs, which I think it convenient to communicate to Your Lordship.

In reply to some remarks from a friend of his own upon that part of the Message⁷ of the President of the United States referring to Texas, he said that all question of the advantage or otherwise of annexation either to the United States or Texas, was entirely superfluous, for he could state in the most positive manner that no scheme of that kind either by treaty, or in any other form, could be carried through the Senate of the United States. The preponderance of Mr. Clay's party in the Senate, and the decided manner in which he repeated this declaration two or three times, will I hope be my excuse for this intrusion.

Being upon this subject I take the liberty to observe to Your Lordship that both my Colleagues Monsieur De Cramayel (who is also staying here) and myself, have been much surprised that the President of the United States should have dwelt at so much length on the affairs of Texas without a word of notice of the feelings or wishes of the Government and people of that Country. It has also appeared to us that this lively interest in the affairs of Texas would have been more kindly timed, and more suited to the necessities

⁶F. O., Texas, Vol. 6. *Ibid.* Elliot to Aberdeen, Nos. 35 and 36, December 31, 1843, have been omitted. No. 35 referred to the "Eliza Russell" claims, and the method of their payment through the collector of customs at Galveston. No. 36 enclosed a return of correspondence for the year 1843.

⁷President Tyler's annual message, December 5, 1843.

of the case in December 1842, when there was reason to apprehend that the Mexicans did meditate an incursion into Texas: But at that time the Government of the United States was negotiating it's claim convention with Mexico, and in the prepare of that business Texian interests and dangers appear to have been overlooked.

At all events there can hardly be thought to be any practical need to declare that Mexico must not be suffered to make war upon Texas, at the particular moment that She is engaged in the attempt to make a peace with Texas, and I must confess that the interference of the United States is not intelligible to me, upon any ground that has been explained. The President's allusion to the particular views, of other Powers, or I believe the phrase is, the peculiar views, is not compatible with due respect for the independence of Texas.

It has been forgotten or disregarded that it is for the Government and people of Texas to consider, and accept or reject any counsels founded upon the peculiar view that Slavery is a wicked and a dangerous Institution, and I am inclined to think that nothing would be better calculated to help the suggestions of other Powers, that [than] these arbitrary declarations of the United States. The President of the United States would never have spoken so imperiously of the perfect right of any State in this Confederacy to deal with it's own affairs, as he has upon this occasion concerning Texas.

I do not believe that this tone will be agreeable to General Houston, and I look for some early and calm notice from that quarter, that Texas has a Government and people. The Message of the President of Texas will reach Your Lordship with these despatches, and I believe it will afford Her Majesty's Government much satisfaction. I hardly know whether I can give better proof of the favorable effect it has produced in this Country amongst well judging persons than to mention that Mr Clay spoke of it in terms of approbation, and indeed generally of General Houston's policy; a circumstance the more honorable to General Houston, as he was always a strong political opponent of Mr Clay's in this Country. Mr Clay indeed did not seem to me to be friendly to the Annexation of Texas to the United States either now, or prospectively. He said more than once that the United States were

wide enough already, and that there was much more of risk, than convenience or strength in extended Confederacies.

In a separate despatch which I had the honor to write to Your Lordship on the 29th Instant, I have requested sanction to reside here or in Texas during the present Agitation of Texian affairs in this Country, and I would wish to add in a private form, that the want of quiet trustworthy channels of Communication between Texas and New Orleans is one of my chief reasons, for requesting that permission

Charles Elliot.

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

ABERDEEN TO ELLIOT^s

Draft.

F. O. January 3d. 1844.

Captn. Elliot.

No. 2.⁹

Sir,

I transmit to You herewith, for Your information, a Copy of a Despatch which I have addressed to H. M's Minister at Washington,¹⁰ with a view to put a stop to the Misrepresentations which have been circulated of late in the United States, and the errors into which the Govt. of that Republic seem to have fallen, on the subject of the policy of Great Britain with respect to Texas.

You will communicate the inclosed Despatch to the Texian Govt.

^sF. O., Texas, Vol. 9. The letter is unsigned.

⁹F. O., Texas, 20. Aberdeen to Elliot, No. 1, January 3, 1844, has been omitted. It acknowledged receipt of despatches from Elliot.

¹⁰Aberdeed to Pakenham, No. 9, December 26, 1843. This is the first of the noted Calhoun-Pakenham letters, and in it Aberdeen, while maintaining Great Britain's right to take ground against slavery wherever found, disclaimed any intention of interfering improperly to secure the abolition of slavery in Texas, or of "seeking to act directly or indirectly in a political sense on the United States through Texas." The correspondence as published in the United States is in Sen. Doc. 341 (Serial No. 435), 28 Cong., 1 Sess. As published in Great Britain it is in Sessional Papers, 1847-8, Commons, Vol. 64, *Return of Pakenham-Calhoun Correspondence* (136), and contains an additional letter, Pakenham to Aberdeen, April 28, 1844. There are also two additional unpublished letters, Aberdeen to Pakenham, January 9 (F. O., Texas, 20), and June 3, 1844 (F. O., America, 403). For quotations and analysis, see Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas*, ch. VII. Smith, *The Annexation of Texas*, p. 200 seq.

KENNEDY TO ABERDEEN¹¹

No. 1.

British Consulate
Galveston, January 5th. 1844.

My Lord,

I have the honor to forward Copy of a Despatch addressed by me to Captain Elliot at New Orleans. To avoid the risk of delay where delay might, perhaps, be disadvantageous, I have also transmitted Copy of the same despatch to Her Majesty's Minister at Washington, United States.

I beg to enclose extracts from a Newspaper called the "*Citizen*,"¹² which was established last Summer for the express purpose of supporting the Measures of General Houston.

William Kennedy.

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

KENNEDY TO ELLIOT¹³

[Enclosure]

British Consulate
Galveston January 2d 1844Copy.
Sir.

I beg to inform you that, by accounts received from the Seat of Government, it appears that on the 19th Ultimo, a "Joint Resolution for the Annexation of Texas to the United States," was read a second time and referred to Committee.

The impression of parties recently arrived from the Seat of Government is that this resolution will pass.

William Kennedy.

Captain Elliot, R. N. New Orleans, U. S.

[Endorsed] Enclosure No 1. In Mr Consul Kennedy's. despatch, dated January. 5th 1844.

KENNEDY TO BIDWELL¹³

No 2.

British Consulate
Galveston January 8th. 1844.

Sir,

The growing Commercial intercourse between England and this Country, and the prospect of its progressive enlargement, render

¹¹F. O., Texas, Vol. 10.¹²December 30, 1843.¹³F. O., Texas, Vol. 10.

it desirable that the attention of the Shipping Interest, should be directed to the character of the Charts generally consulted on voyages to Texas. Of all that I have had an opportunity of inspecting, not one is correct, while some are considerably, and some extravagantly in error.

There are, at present, five British Vessels in this Port.—The Chart used on board one of these (represented by the publishers as corrected to the year 1841) exhibits an error of nearly two degrees in the Longitude of Galveston Island. The Charts of two others, which the publishers describe as having been corrected to the year 1843, severally indicate the depth of water on Galveston Bar at Sixteen or Sixteen and a half feet,—the real depth being, at low water, about ten feet, and, at high water, twelve, except on the occasion of a Spring tide. In all the Charts hitherto in use, the Coast line of Texas is wrongly laid down.—Of the five Merchant Vessels I have mentioned, the last that has arrived—A Schooner from Nassau, New Providence—ran aground in attempting to make the Port, and was only got off by sacrificing part of her Cargo, —A Misfortune attributed by the Master to his Chart, which it appears, misled him to the extent of some sixty Miles.

Voyages to Galveston are burthened with an unusually high rate of insurance, yet, with such a Measure of Caution as no honest and judicious Ship Master will fail to exercise, and the assistance of a trust-worthy Chart, no extraordinary danger, or difficulty need be apprehended for vessels whose draughts of water will permit them to pass the Bar.

In the hope that it may prove useful, I have the honor to transmit a Chart¹⁴ of Galveston Bar, and Harbour, as surveyed in 1841 by the Commodore of the Texan Navy, and recently corrected by an experienced local draughtsman. On the accuracy of this Chart, with reference to all the points essential to be known by Navigators, reliance may be placed.

It will be seen that the North East end of Galveston Island is in Latitude N. 29°, 18', 50" and Longitude W. 94°, 48', 30".

The average height of the Island, above the bed of the Sea, is eight feet—and of the Sand-hills that border the Coast, fifteen feet. —Some conspicuous land mark is much required, as a guide to

¹⁴Not found.

Vessels when making the Port. There were formerly beacons on the North East end of the Island, but these disappeared in 1842, and have not yet been replaced. The authorities, however, in answer to an application from this Consulate, have expressed an intention "to have the necessary beacons, or land-marks erected, so as to enable vessels bound inwards to make the Anchorage, or pass into the Harbour, without danger."

The Coast being so low, particularly in the neighbourhood of the Bars, breakers may generally be observed, and vessels becalmed, on approaching the Bars, must guard against the indraught Current, from neglect of which precaution, some have been lost.

Navigators will do well to keep a sharp look-out for Currents, which run in the direction of the prevailing winds. The Currents inshore will vary a little according to the veering of the wind, and the shallowness of the water renders this variation comparatively rapid. A vessel becalmed near the land is liable to drift ashore, unless she be brought to an anchor, which can be safely and easily effected at any point along the Coast.

The "Norther," which is the prevailing wind during the Winter Months, produces gales, but they are not of long duration. If a Vessel is caught by a "Norther," it will blow her off the shore. During the greater part of the year, especially in Summer, South Easterly winds prevail, with variations caused by local influences. After a continuence of strong Northerly winds, the water in Galveston Bay is "blown out," and, for some succeeding days, the tides seem very strong.—A vessel at Anchor in the Stream should be carefully and well secured.

According to returns from the Galveston Custom-House, Sixteen British Vessels, sailed to that Port in the years 1841 and 1842. Of these, four were lost on the Coast, while it does not appear that any American Vessels, of which a much greater number visited the Port, experienced a similar fate during those years. Other causes than the intricacy of the Navigation, or the infidelity of the Charts, have certainly been assigned for the loss of the four Ships, but the latter is not the less an evil that calls for remedy as well as notice.

William Kennedy.

John Bidwell, Esq.

ABERDEEN TO ELLIOT¹⁵

Draft.

F. O. January 11th. 1844.

Capt. Elliott. R. N.

No. 4.¹⁶

Sir.

With reference to my Despatch No. 2, of the 3d Inst. I transmit to you herewith, for Your Information a Copy of a Despatch¹⁷ which I have addressed to Her Majesty's Minister at Washington, on the subject of that part of the late Message of the President of the United States to Congress which relates to Texas.

P. S. I have to direct You to read the inclosed despatch to the Texian Secretary of State.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN¹⁸

No. 4.¹⁹

New Orleans, Jany. 15th. 1844.

My Lord,

Nothing is yet officially known of the proceedings of the Texian Commissioners charged with the attempt to conclude a truce with Mexico. But I hear from authentic sources of a letter from one of them (dated on the 6th Ultimo) which mentions that although their progress was slow, he did not despair of some satisfactory conclusion

The Message of the President of the United States, however, could not be known in Mexico before the end of last Month, at the earliest, and Your Lordship will be best able to judge of it's effect on the pending negotiations.

¹⁵F. O., Texas, Vol. 9. The letter is unsigned.

¹⁶F. O., Texas, 20, Aberdeen to Elliot, No. 3, January 3, 1844, has been omitted. It related to the whereabouts of Mr. John Orr and contained copies of letters from Doyle and from Orr's father.

¹⁷F. O., Texas, 20, Aberdeen to Pakenham, No. 1, January 9, 1844. See note 10, p. 91. Aberdeen expressed indignation at the tone of President Tyler's message in which it had been hinted that England was seeking to block the annexation of Texas. Pakenham was instructed to communicate the contents to the American Secretary of State, but did not do so, and the letter was never published. For quotation, see Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas*, 156-157.

¹⁸F. O., Texas, Vol. 9.

¹⁹F. O., Texas, 9, Nos. 1 and 2, 1844, Elliot to Aberdeen are missing from the archives. No. 3, January 12, 1844, has been omitted. It transmitted bills in settlement of the "Eliza Russell" claims.

I collect from the public prints in this Country that a Second Convention for the settlement of certain Claims of Citizens of the United States has recently been concluded at Mexico, and I am disposed to think that the agitation of the question of Annexation, at least by the Government of the United States, will be a good deal quieted by that event. That agitation, with other accidental circumstances, served no doubt to forward the conclusion of the Convention. But perhaps that Measure, and the breaking up of the Negotiations, if that too should happen, will restore the Government of the United States to the same state of feeling in this respect, as had always obtained up to the period of the late armistice; except indeed when their own immediate affairs become matter of urgent pressure at Mexico. In that state of things, the Situation of Texas, and the character of the warfare, were forcibly insisted upon, as was the case for example, shortly before the claim convention of last year; But the satisfactory settlement of the claim negotiations appears to have been attended with tranquillising effects on the other grounds of interest and remonstrance.

Observing that these affairs are once more in question between the Governments of the United States and Mexico, it is to be hoped that the first will be able and willing to satisfy the other, that there is no purpose of annexing Texas to the North American Union. That would probably be the most hopeful mode of pacificating this Contest, the kindest course both to Texas and to Mexico, and in the opinion of the most eminent Statesmen in the United States, the sound and honorable policy for their own Country.

I should mention to Your Lordship that movements have been made in the Texian Congress in the direction of annexation to the United States, but I do not enter into that subject at present, because they have not yet passed into any definite form.

Charles Elliot.

To the Right Honorable

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

ABERDEEN TO ELLIOT²⁰

Draft.

F. O. Jany. 31. 1844.

Captain Elliot.

No 5. Confidl.

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No. 4. of the 11th inst. respecting that part of the late Message of the President of the United States to Congress which relates to Texas, I transmit to you Confidentially herewith for your information a Copy of a despatch upon this subject which I addressed on the 12th inst. to Lord Cowley H. M Ambassador at Paris, together with an Extract of H. E. reply thereto. I also enclose an Extract of the despatch from Mr. Fox referred to in my despatch to Lord Cowley.²¹

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN²²

No. 5.

New Orleans February 10th. 1844.

My Lord,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Your Lordship's despatches to No 3 of this year, and to transmit herewith the Copy of a Note which I have this day addressed to the Secretary of State of Texas, covering the Copy of Your Lordship's Despatch No. 9 of last year to Mr. Pakenham.²³

The state of my health has prevented me from proceeding to Texas by this occasion. But it appeared to me to be of consequence at this Conjuncture, that no time should be lost in placing General Houston in possession of this exposition,—And I therefore determined to forward a Copy of the despatch, signifying at the same time, in a private note to the Secretary of State, that it would not

²⁰F. O., Texas, Vol. 9. The letter is unsigned.

²¹F. O., Texas, 20. Aberdeen to Cowley, No. 16, January 12, 1844; Cowley to Aberdeen, No. 33, January 15, 1844; Fox to Aberdeen, No. 133, December 13, 1843. Aberdeen, stirred by Tyler's message foreshadowing annexation, virtually proposed to France to join with Great Britain in preventing this. France gave a favorable reply. For quotations from these documents, and analysis, see Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas*, pp. 157-160; Smith, *The Annexation of Texas*, p. 383, seq.

²²F. O., Texas, Vol. 9.

²³This was Aberdeen's instruction to Pakenham, December 26, 1843. See Note 10, p. 91.

be convenient it should be published in Texas, unless the Government of the United States, to which it was particularly addressed, should see fit to publish it in this Country.

I am recovering from my indisposition, and hope to be able to pay a visit to General Houston by the next boat, which will leave in two or three days.

Rumours are in circulation here (brought from Texas) that a truce of 10 years has been agreed upon, between the Mexican and Texian Commissioners,—but I have a few private words from an authentic source dated at Washington in Texas on the 6th Instant, and at that date they were not in possession of any such information, and did not write in confidence of such a result. I am not without hope, however, that a state of truce may be maintained.

Charles Elliot.

To the Right Honorable,

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

ELLIOT TO JONES²⁴

[Enclosure.]

New Orleans, February 10th 1844.

Copy

Charles Elliot.

The Undersigned Her Britannic Majesty's Chargé d' Affaires to the Republic of Texas, has the honor to transmit to Mr Jones the Copy of a despatch from The Earl of Aberdeen to Her Majesty's Minister at Washington, and he regrets that the state of his health prevents him from having the pleasure of communicating it in person.

The President will perceive from this exposition to the Government of the United States how accurately he has always estimated the friendly purposes of Her Majesty's Government towards the Republic of Texas, and their state of feeling and principle of guidance upon all the other points adverted to in the despatch to Mr. Packenham.

In forwarding this Communication The Undersigned is sensible that it would be superfluous on his part to dwell upon the continued interest which Her Majesty's Government takes in the

²⁴F. O., Texas, Vol. 9.

Independence and prosperity of Texas, or to do more than repeat the assurance of their continued efforts to promote those results.

Charles Elliot.

To The Honorable Anson Jones, Washington on the Brazos.

[Endorsed.] Inclosure in the Despatch No. 5. from Captain Elliot to the Earl of Aberdeen, Feb. 10, 1844.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN²⁵

No. 6.

New Orleans, Feby 17th 1844.

My Lord.

It has been so generally reported in Texas that a scheme of Annexation to the United States by treaty, is in an advanced state, that I consider it right to notice these reports to Your Lordship; remarking that nothing of the kind has transpired here, and that the statement is not believed by persons of great knowledge and weight in this Country.

Your Lordship has however been for some time aware of the feelings and purposes of the present administration in the United States upon this subject, and will of course be fully informed of the actual position of circumstances at Washington, in relation to it.

But speaking of the policy of the Government of Texas, I will not hesitate to repeat my belief that the President is steadily determined to sustain the durable independence of the Country. Your Lordship however, is aware of the pressed condition of Texas, and if the recent movements at Washington should induce a rupture of the truce, and the option of annexation to the United States should really present itself (of the likelihood of which, I am an incompetent judge) it is not to be expected that the Government of Texas could or would resist the popular impulses in that direction.

Upon the whole there is reason to believe that the Government of Mexico should put an end to all further risk of inconvenient Complication, by adjusting a truce with Texas, accompanied by declarations, necessary for it's own safety

I leave for Texas the day after tomorrow to pay a visit to Gen-

²⁵F. O., Texas, Vol. 9.

eral Houston, but my health is so shattered that I must request Your Lordship will have the goodness to grant me leave to proceed to the Northern parts of the United States whenever I may find it necessary to depart. Indeed I should have already availed myself of Your Lordship's leave of absence, but I thought it might be convenient to the public interests that I should remain, either till the truce had been steadily established, or till it's rupture, consequent upon the tone at Washington, had produced such a different phase of affairs, as might change the position of Her Majesty's Government in respect to them.

Charles Elliot.

To The Right Honorable

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN²⁶

Separate.

New Orleans.

March. 7th 1844.

My Lord,

Since I had the Honor to address you last, I have been afflicted by a dangerous Sickness, which has left me almost without strength.

Your Lordship will observe by the accompanying Medical Certificate that I have no choice but to request permission to leave these Climates as soon as possible

I should prefer to return to Europe as the Certificate advises, but if Your Lordship shall be of opinion that it would be more convenient for the public interest that I should not go so far from my Post at present I would endeavour to find suitable change on the Northern parts of this Continent, and return to my duties as soon as my health enabled me.

Charles Elliot.

The Right Honorable,

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

²⁶F. O., Texas, Vol. 9.

RUSHTON TO ELLIOT²⁷

[Enclosure.]

New Orleans.

7th March. 1844.

My Dear Sir,

I think it my duty to advise you as a Measure absolutely necessary to re-establish your health, that you change our Climate for a Northern one and that you leave New Orleans and its vicinity at as early a period as may be practicable

I conceive that your attack of severe Dysentery has proceeded from a debilitated state of the Digestive Organs, brought on by long residence in tropical Climates, and am satisfied that your continued residence either here, or in a latitude as low as Texas, would be attended with great risk of a return of your present Complaint, and from the consequences of such a return you have everything to dread.

Under these circumstances, I conceive it your duty at whatever sacrifice, to leave our hot and humid Climate, for one more dry and bracing.

W. Rushton: M. D. Edin

To Capt. Elliot.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN²⁷

No. 8.²⁸

New Orleans, March 15th. 1844.

My Lord,

I have the honor to transmit the Copy of a note which I have recently received from Mr Jones²⁹ acknowledging my own note of the 10th Ultimo already forwarded to Your Lordship.

The Government of Texas has lately dispatched two Gentlemen in the President's particular confidence (General Henderson³⁰ and

²⁷F. O., Texas, Vol. 9.

²⁸F. O., Texas, 9. Elliot to Aberdeen, No. 7, March 7, 1844, acknowledging receipt of despatches, has been omitted.

²⁹Jones to Elliot. February 19, 1844. In Garrison, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas*, III, 1149, in *Am. Hist. Assoc. Report*, 1908, II.

³⁰James Pinckney Henderson, b. North Carolina, 1808; d. Washington, D. C., 1858. He served as brigadier-general in the Texan army, 1836, was secretary of state, 1837-1839, diplomatic agent in England and France, 1839-1840, was sent on a special annexation mission to the United States,

Mr. J. D. Miller) to Washington, and joining that circumstance to the movements in the Texian Congress and to the steady current of report, both in the United States and in Texas, that Negotiations are either on foot, or in contemplation upon the subject of annexation. I shall consider it my duty to request the Government of Texas to furnish me with explanations of the real state of affairs in this particular, for transmission to Your Lordship.

My health is still very weak, but I trust I shall be able to go to Galveston for a few days by the boat of the 18th instant. I should add that I am going under strong Medical advice as soon as possible, and proceed to to the Northward.

I learn by a few private lines from Mr Jones of the 16th February, that up to the 6th January their Negotiations for a truce had gone on perfectly satisfactorily, indeed that every point but one was adjusted.

But at that period the negotiations were suddenly suspended by command from Mexico, and forming my opinion from the date of this order, it seems probable that the interruption may have arisen from the nature of the Communications which the Mexican Government was then receiving from Washington on the Potomac.

It was thought by the Texian Commissioners, and Government that the Negotiations would be renewed.

Charles Elliot.

To The Right Honorable,
The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN³¹

No. 9. Galveston March 27th. 1844.
My Lord,

I have just received from Mr Jones in a private way, a Copy of an Armistice³² recently concluded between the Mexican and Texian Commissioners, and the Steam boat being upon the point

1844. He became Governor of Texas, 1846, and was appointed to the United States Senate, 1857. (Appleton, *Cyclop. of Amer. Biog.*)

³¹F. O., Texas, Vol. 9.

³²This was the armistice signed February 15, 1844, by Hockley and Williams, the Texan negotiators, in which Texas was characterized as a Mexican Department. The government of Texas refused to ratify such an agreement.

of starting for New Orleans, I have only the time to offer a very few remarks upon the subject.

It is not to be doubted, that these stringent conditions upon the part of Mexico are attributable to the alarm, and irritation excited in that quarter by the movements of the Government of the United States in relation to annexation, joined to the impression that the Agents of this Government at Washington upon the Potomac, were in the actual course of negotiation upon that subject.

I offer this opinion without hesitation, because it consists with my knowledge that the terms agreed upon between the Mexican and Texian Commissioners before the intelligence of the movements at Washington could have reached Mexico were of a much easier and more practicable nature than these. I think it can be no source of surprise to Her Majesty's Government that later intelligence should have determined the Government of Mexico to provide for it's own security, by taking care not to grant a truce of convenient duration for the deliberate conduct of negotiations at Washington, having in view the Annexation of this Country to the North American Union.

The single prospect that presents itself to my mind of a renewal of these negotiations between Mexico and Texas upon a hopeful "footing" is that this Government should at once desire it's Agents at Washington to signify to the Government there, that an Armistice had been concluded between this Republic and Mexico; and that the President felt it due to the honor of this Country, and just to all other parties concerned to put an end to Negotiations for Annexation to the United States of America, whilst Negotiations were going forward at Mexico, proposing a totally different settlement. And if this Government take that course, and proposes at the same time to the Government of Mexico to extend the Armistice to such a period as will be really necessary for the conduct of the Negotiations in that quarter, it seems possible that the Ministers of the Powers friendly to a safe and honorable adjustment of this dispute may be enabled to induce the Government of Mexico to grant more satisfactory terms of Armistice, than these now placed under Your Lordship's notice.

Having no time to write a Separate despatch to Her Majesty's Minister at Washington by this opportunity, I have taken the

liberty to enclose this dispatch to him, with a request that he will peruse, and forward it to Your Lordship.

I remarked to the President and the Secretary of State last Autumn that it seemed to me the Schemes of the Government of the United States were shaped with the alternative project of settling this question in the way that pleased them, or of unsettling any other arrangement, and I can detect no subsequent reason for thinking that the impression I formed then, was erroneous.

My health is still in a very precarious state, but I am remaining here for a few days in the hope that I shall have the pleasure of seeing the President or the Secretary of State at this place.

Charles Elliot.

To The Right Honorable,
The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN³³

Secret.

Galveston. April 7th. 1844.

My Lord,

I have the honor to inclose Copies of a correspondence which I have recently had with this Government, and I take the same opportunity to report to Your Lordship the substance of a Conversation that I have this day had with General Houston, taking the liberty to remark that he particularly requested me to consider it unofficial, and private.

The period and nature of the first approach of the Government of the United States to that of Texas upon the subject of annexation are known to Your Lordship, as well as the manner in which it was met from this quarter. The Texian Agent at Washington continued nevertheless to move the President to abandon the determination not to entertain the matter whilst any uncertainty existed as to the willingness of the Senate of the United States to ratify a treaty of annexation:

But General Houston adhered steadfastly to his own policy, notwithstanding all the eagerness excited in Texas, both in Congress and amongst the people, by the movements of the Government of the United States, and I should add in spite of pressing private

³³F. O., Texas, Vol. 9.

instances from persons of great weight in that Country, to whom he is warmly attached.

At length, however, having reason to know that the two Houses of Congress had prepared and would carry resolutions, either unanimously, or certainly by a Constitutional Majority, which would have deprived him of all further control of this business, he considered that the safest course was to prevent that turn of affairs by a Secret Message,³⁴ expressing his readiness to attempt to meet the wishes of the people, and for that purpose requesting an appropriation to dispatch a Special envoy to Washington to be charged with the proposed Negotiations. It may be observed here, that General Houston led me to understand that he had not committed himself to any personal opinion in favor of the contemplated arrangement, in this Message.

The result of this step was the passing of an Act or resolution involving the required appropriation, the other details of which General Houston did not feel himself at liberty to disclose, the Measure having been committed to his further management under the Seal of Secrecy.

In this stage of affairs Congress separated, and General Houston does not appear to have been in any haste to dispatch the Envoy, till he should ascertain the result of the Negotiations for the truce with Mexico. The consequence of the proceedings at Washington upon these Negotiations is already before Your Lordship; but it appears that about the time that the Government of Texas learnt that there was little to hope from that quarter, another very pressing official representation from Mr Upshur was brought to the President by General Murphy, accompanied by General Henderson, the Gentleman selected for the Mission to Washington

This representation, of great length and urgency, (I use General Houston's language as nearly as my memory serves me) Containing argument, encouragement, solicitation, and indeed little short of Menace, was met upon his side by an exhibition of the uneasy condition into which the proposal of these Negotiations had already cast the Country, and of the still more dangerous consequences which would ensue from the probable breaking up of

³⁴Houston's secret message on annexation, January 20, 1844. (Wooten, *Texas*, I, 425-426.)

their present hopes of arrangement, and present support, and the equally probable result of the failure of the Scheme of annexation in the Senate of the United States.

In view of all these considerations he required from the American Chargé d' Affaires an official letter to the Secretary of State of Texas (beyond the letter of Mr Upshur) expressive of his consent upon the part of the Government of the United States, that they should Communicate in a formal written way to the Envoy of Texas, *before any Negotiations were opened*, their readiness to place at the disposal of the Government of Texas, a Column of 1000 infantry, and 600 or 700 heavy Cavalry, to be moved, whenever it might be considered necessary for the safety of this Country, to the Western border of Texas, further that a Naval force equal to that of Mexico should forthwith be stationed in the Gulph of Mexico, also to be at the disposal of this Government, and finally, that the Government of the United States should distinctly guarantee to Texas the acknowledgment of it's Independence by Mexico, if the project of annexation failed of success.

General Houston states that General Murphy did write the letter in question, and assures me that the Instructions to General Henderson are precise and imperative upon the refusal to open Negotiations till the required written guarantees of the Government of the United States are duly furnished.

I have now submitted to Your Lordship what I collected from General Houston's private conversation to be the present situation of these affairs, so far as this Government is concerned; and in reply to his observations on the difficulty of his position, I said that I could not doubt they would be appreciated by Her Majesty's Government.

But I could not refrain from remarking that I thought it would have been a wiser and more just policy upon the part of the Congress and people of Texas, to have adhered to their declarations of determination to maintain their Independence. Such a course would have reassured the Government of Mexico, and given increased force to the representations of the Powers engaged in inducing the settlement of this dispute upon that footing—Indeed, except for these proposals of annexation to the United States, and the readiness of Texas to meet them, it did not seem to me that

there was much risk of any renewal of hostilities between the Contending parties. Mexico had invited negotiation and settlement; and as Texas seemed to be willing to make the sacrifice of it's Independence in one question, I could not [doubt] the Government of Texas would have found any serious difficulty in maintaining a state of truce (particularly with the assistance of friendly powers) but that state of truce should gradually ripen into a state of permanent peace.

Speaking without express authority from Her Majesty's Government, I would nevertheless take the liberty to say that it seemed to me the honorable and the wise course upon the part of the Government of Texas to all parties concerned would be to instruct General Henderson forthwith to announce to the Government of the United States that an armistice had been concluded between Texas and Mexico, and that whilst Negotiations continued open in that quarter, there must be an end of all Negotiations not actually concluded at Washington, upon the express terms of General Henderson's Instructions

Situated as he feels himself to be, General Houston would not take this step, but I think it highly possible that he has pressed upon General Henderson the necessity of precise adherence to his Instructions, neither do I imagine that he has ever entertained much confidence in the success of the Scheme of annexation, or certainly any personal wish to postpone the Independence of the Country to such a solution. He said that if the project failed he trusted that the Governments of Her Majesty, and The King of the French would find means of preventing all further risk of complication in that direction, by forthwith accomplishing the Settlement of the question on the basis of the acknowledgment of Texas by Mexico. I remarked that what had lately passed was hardly calculated to strengthen the friendly purposes of those Governments, or to inspire them with Confidence.

General Houston appeared to attach much importance to General Murphy's letter, and to the stringent conditions General Henderson would insist upon, before Negotiations were opened. But I told him that I would not regard those considerations in the same point of view. It seemed plain to me, on the contrary, that if the Government of the United States could carry through their pro-

ject, it would be upon their own terms, not upon conditions dictated by Texas. General Henderson would be told in an early stage of affairs that if he adhered to conditions which General Houston must have known that the Government of the United States could not act upon, the arrangement must fall to the ground, and the people of Texas would judge where the blame should be laid. As for General Murphy's letter of consent, it would be easy for the Government of the United States to disavow that proceeding, and upon the whole I could not think that these precautions would serve any other purpose than to enable the Government of the United States to get rid of the difficulty easily, and injuriously to General Houston, if they found they could not carry out their Scheme. If they could carry it, General Henderson would probably be easily prevailed upon to sign the treaty upon their terms, and trust to the people of Texas for support.

The detention of the Texian prisoners by Mexico, and the indisposition to grant a truce of any considerable duration to Texas deprived this Government of sufficient strength to resist the recent influences from another quarter, and it may be that General Houston adopted the only course left to him for the maintenance of any control over events.

I shall take the liberty to forward this despatch under cover to Her Majesty's Minister at Washington for his perusal, as also a Copy to Mr Bankhead.³⁵

Charles Elliot.

To the Right Honorable,
The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

³⁵British Minister at Mexico. Pakenham had been transferred from Mexico to Washington in 1843, and after an interval during which Doyle represented Great Britain, Bankhead was appointed, arriving in Mexico early in 1844.